



Latvian Geospatial
Information Agency

Work with Geographical Names: Latvia, LGIA

22th Meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN
Warsaw 15–17 March 2023

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<http://www.lgia.gov.lv>





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International activities

Participation in international events:

- the 2nd Session of the (new) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
- the 21st Meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN
 - Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022–2032)
 - the 27th International Council of Onomastic Sciences
 - the XIII International Congress of Balticists in 2021



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Names authorities

Assigning/approving official names

No.	Names authorities	Features which names they shall assign or approve
1.	Parliament and Government	Units of administrative and territorial division
2.	Distinct ministries	State protected areas and cultural monuments, public transport features, maritime navigation features, quarries, forestries etc.
3.	Latvian Geospatial Information Agency	Natural features
4.	All municipalities	Addressing system features (villages and smaller), parts of towns, parts of villages, artificial water bodies, small hydroelectric power stations, parks, cemeteries, immovable property (real estates), and other man-made features including natural, historical and cultural monuments of local significance



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Names authorities Control and consulting

Controlling and advisory body –
the State Language Centre

Consultative expert body with recommendatory rights –
**the Place Names Sub-commission of the Latvian
Language Expert Commission, the State Language Centre**

Consulting and scientific bodies:

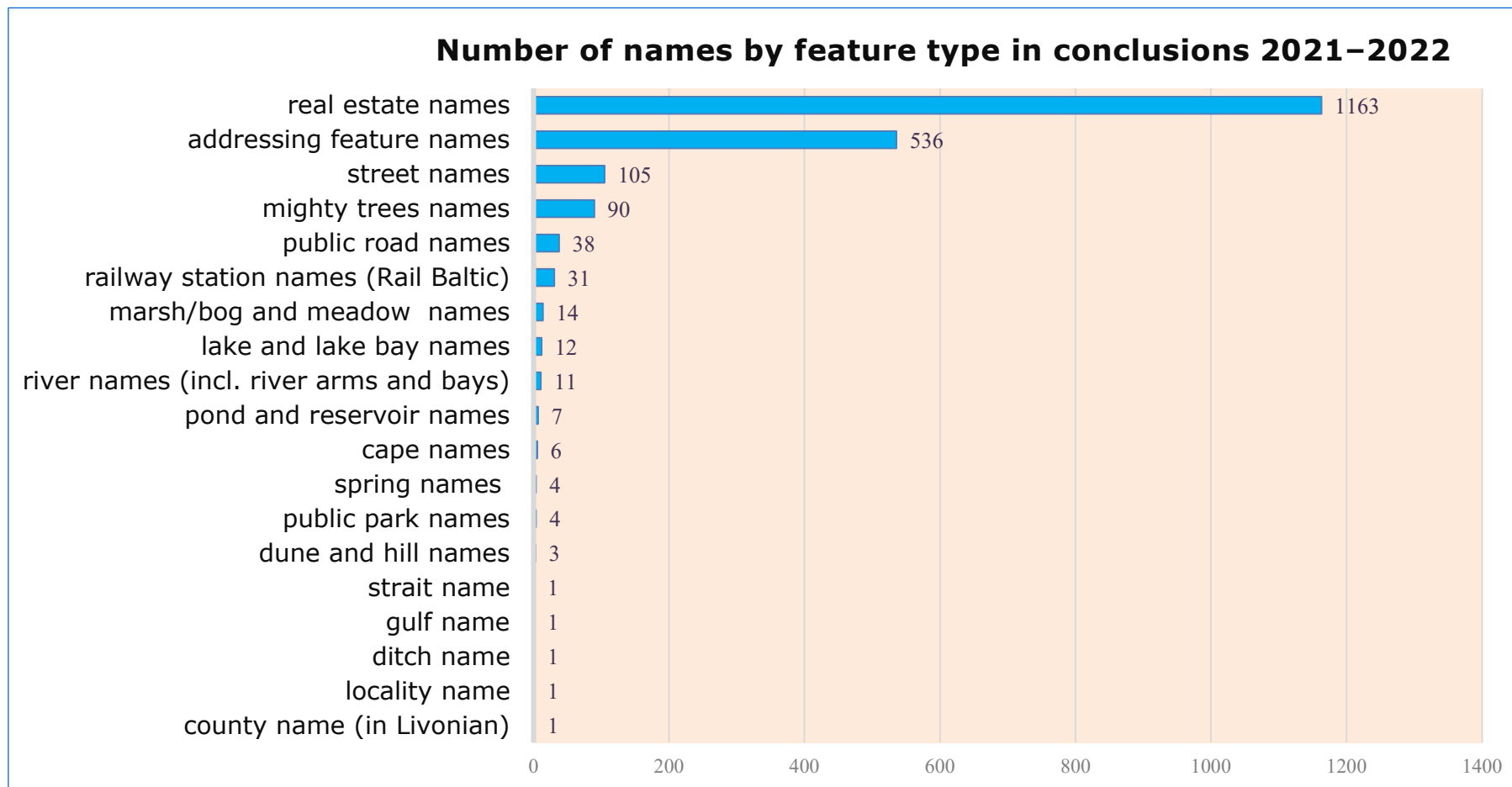
- **Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia**
- **Latvian Language Agency**
- **Latvian Geospatial Information Agency**



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Names authorities

Conclusion of the State Language centre is obligatory
for approving official names for all kinds of geographical features





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Amended legislative acts with place names lists

Amended in 2021–2022:

- *Civil Law. Annexes*
- *Fishery Law*
- *Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on protected geological and geomorphological natural monuments*

All names (<600) were revised and updated in collaboration between Latvian Geospatial Information Agency and State Language Centre in 2018–2020

Recommended and official names – to support Ukraine

Before the 23.02.2023: the names of the largest cities of Ukraine were traditionally rendered in Latvian from Russian

After: on 28.02.2022 almost 150 translators, writers and linguists wrote a public request to stop using the «Russian names» for Ukrainian cities

On 09.03.2022 the **State Language Centre recommended to render the names of 31 cities of Ukraine from the Ukrainian** – as close to the original, as it is possible: **Kijiva** instead of Kijeva, **Harkiva** instead of Harkova etc.

On 10.03.2022 Riga City Council renamed the section of Antonijas street where the Russian Embassy in Latvia is located to **Ukrainian Independence street**





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Recommended and official names – to support Ukraine



*Photo by Dace Kavace,
Laboratory of Toponymy, Latvian Geospatial Information Agency*

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Riga City Council renamed
the section of Antonijas
street where the Russian
Embassy in Latvia is
located to the **Ukrainian
Independence street**



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Legislative basis

The **main legislative acts** regarding the geographical names standardization in Latvia:

- *Official Language Law* (in force from 2000)
- *Geospatial Information Law* (in force from 2010)
- *Regulations Regarding Geographical Names Information* (Regulations on Toponymic Information) (in force from 2012)



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Legislation – news

Law on Latvian Historical Lands (in force from 2021)

Aiming to create the necessary preconditions for strengthening the common identity of the population and for the preservation and sustainable development of the cultural and historical environment of the historical Latvian lands

Amongst other the law stipulates:

“4.(7) The state and relevant municipalities ensure the preservation and sustainable development of the identity and cultural-historical environment of the indigenous (autochthonic) inhabitants of Latvia - Livonians, as well as the preservation of their cultural-historical heritage, including by promoting the learning and use of the **Livonian language**, as well as introducing and using place names in Livonian language in the environment.

4.(8) The state and relevant municipalities ensure the preservation and sustainable development of the Latgalian identity and cultural-historical environment, including by promoting the learning of the **Latgalian written language** as a variant of the Latvian language, including in educational institutions, and its use in public events and daily work, as well as by restoring and using in the environment place names in Latgalian, including on road signs, in naming of places and streets.”



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Legislation – news

Map of the Latvian Historical Lands



Source: Nacionālā enciklopēdija, <https://enciklopedija.lv/> [10.03.2023.]



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Administrative-territorial reform 2020-2021



**A new version of the *Regulations on Addressing*
was issued on June 2021**

Source: <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/karte>



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Administrative-territorial reform 2020-2021

The main outcomes:

- **A new administrative-territorial division** of Latvia
- **Reduced number of local governments** – 43 local governments instead of previous 119 (borders of lower-level territorial units remained unchanged)
- **5 new towns: Koknese, Iecava, Ādaži, Ķekava, Mārupe**
- **Expanded criteria for recognizing official villages to fit also small settlements:** a new category was introduced – *small village* – a historically formed settlement with dominant disperse built-up area or dominant concentrated built-up area

Almost 5 000 small villages remained registered in the National Address Register by this



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Names collecting crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing website with electronic place names database *Tautas vietvārdu datubāze* – since February 2017 – more than 6 000 names:

<https://vietvardi.lv/talka/>

- maintained by the Latvian Language Institute and the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Sciences of the University of Latvia
- open for any interested person
- enables to register a name, its spelling, pronunciation, localization (in the parish and on the map) and related cultural, historical and linguistic information


A new platform of crowdsourcing tool for collecting Latvian place names (<https://vietvardi.lu.lv>) opened for public from February 22, 2023 – the 150th anniversary of Jānis Endzelīns, the outstanding Latvian linguist, author of the dictionary of Latvian place names



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Names collecting crowdsourcing

vietvardi.lu.lv [ieiet](#) | [Reģistrēties](#)


LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE
LATVIEŠU VALODAS
INSTITŪTS

Vietvārdu talka

Vietvārds ir īpašvārds, kas nosauc ģeogrāfisku objektu

Vairāk par talku [vari uzzināt šeit](#)

[Pievienot vietvārdu](#) +

Meklēt vietvārdu... [→](#)

Pēdējie pievienotie vārdi | [Skatīt visus](#)

Vietvārds	Paralelformas	Objekta veids	Vieta
Sudals	☐ Sudalezers	ezers	Lejasciema pagasts
Sudalezers	Sudals	ezers	Lejasciema pagasts
Skreipslas kanava		grāvis	Feimaņu pagasts
Rozļyvs		purvs	Feimaņu pagasts
Dieglis		purvs	Feimaņu pagasts
Stūrīšu ezers	kropļojumā - `Stūrīšu`	ezeru grupa	Olaines pagasts
kropļojumā - `Stūrīšu`	Stūrīšu ezers	ezeru grupa	Olaines pagasts
Kuņaste		plava	Olaines pagasts

Projekta statistika

Datubāzes apjoms

6828 vārdi

[Izvērstā statistika](#)

Aktīvākie lietotāji

Lietotājs	Vārdu skaits
Upelniex	1248
sanda	702
ancete	574

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Work with Geographical Names: Latvia

Toponymic data files and gazetteers

The Place Names Database of Latvia maintained by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency (Laboratory of Toponymy):

183.8 thousand names

of 131.6 thousand features (data on January 2, 2023)

Place names **dictionary "Lakes in Annexes of the Civilian Law. Geographical dictionary of place names"** comprising 417 names of lakes and reservoirs is published by LGIA on 2022 *.pdf* file, free download at: <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/sites/lgia/files/document/VARDNICA.pdf>

Each entry contains information on the water body and its names from the Place Names database as well as data from topographic maps.



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Other information systems

The National Address Register maintained by the State Land Service

- Names of all administrative territories and territorial units of Latvia: **36 counties, 511 civil parishes, 81 cities and towns), 6272 officially recognized villages (including 1359 villages and 4913 small villages), 18 374 streets, 222 050 houses, other buildings and land units intended for buildings** (data on January 04, 2023)
- Names search in the State Address Register is available on the data distribution portal of the State Land Service of Latvia at: <https://www.kadastrs.lv/> (interface in Latvian and English)
- Search of real estate names is also available there
- Textual and spatial data cover all the territory of Latvia

Linguistic toponymic data files and dictionaries

The Latvian Place Names Card Index (or card file) (approximately 1 000 000 domestic geographical names) – maintained by the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia – mainly linguistic information

Digitized basic part of the Card Index – 842 000 scanned hand-written place names cards – available for scientific research and place names standardization (by the request)

The Card Index – the main source for compiling the comprehensive **linguistic dictionary “Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca” (Dictionary of Latvian Place Names**, in Latvian, with preface in English). A new «S» volume of the dictionary with toponyms “Sgajevski-Sļozovka” (approximately 21 000 place names) will be published in 2024

The Electronic Historical Latvian Dictionary (<https://tezaurs.lv/lvvv/>) comprises 612 historical proper names from historical sources (search query for place names is *n/oc.* ‘nomen loci’)



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Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names

Livonian language – the language of the indigenous (autochthonic) population – **place names in the Livonian coastal territory shall also be created and used in Livonian**

The Livonian Institute of the University of Latvia:

- 1) Identification and standardization of place names in Livonian, currently **1140 names have identified**
- 2) Maintenance of the **Database of Livonian place names** (1150 names) **and a Livonian place names map**. Public version of the database and the map: <https://livonian.tech/en/>
- 3) identifying and reconstruction of place names in the historical Livonian area (from August 2021), with intension of using these names in the public space (on road signs) have done

The **Livonian Language Commission**, whose tasks include Livonian language and Livonian place names standardization and consulting on language issues starts its work in 2023



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Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names



Ceremonial opening of Talsi county border sign in Latvian and Livonian, with participation of the President of the Republic of Latvia, February 20, 2023.

Photo by Ilmārs Znotiņš. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/valstsprezidents/albums/> [10.03.2023]



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Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names

The Law on Latvian Historical Territories adopted in 2021 has facilitated:

- 1) standardization of place names **in Livonian**
- 2) starting and identical efforts in Latgale, where the first **Latvian/Latgalian road signs** were installed on November 18, 2021

The Official Language Law determines that the State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the **Latgalian written language as a historic variant of the Latvian language**



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Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names



Blessing of Balvi county border sign in Latvian and Latgalian written language, November 18, 2021.

Photo by Agrita Luža. Source: Balvi County Municipality Facebook Profile, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=3018504428362525&set=pcb.3018505675029067>



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Place Names Days

Regional Place Names Days organized by the Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia in collaboration with Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, local governments etc. – yearly since 2018 (except 2021)

The aim – to promote awareness of regional place names, their importance and role, to collect names, to exchange experience, impressions and opinions

Place Names Day 2022 – in Latgale, Galēni parish (south-east of Latvia):

- Place names collection fieldwork involving local people (more than 300 place names were collected)
- Presentations about regional place names, their significance and georeferencing
- Local place-names quiz and a concert

Place names in state cartography

The most significant state cartography projects regarding place names:

Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000 (2792 sheets, in digital version only, the 4th edition is in process)

Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:50 000 (131 sheet, in digital and printed versions, the 4rd edition is in process)

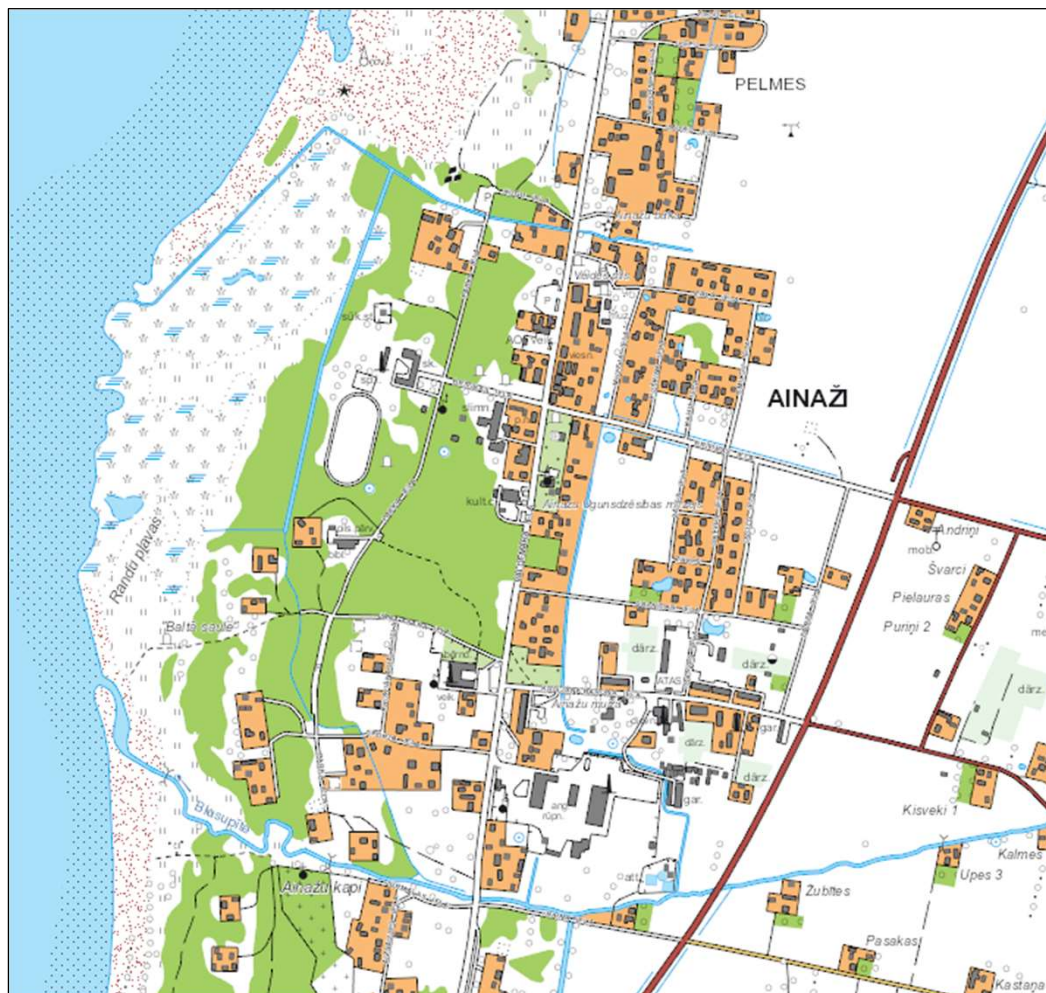
Place names data on maps, prepared by Latvian Geospatial information Agency is in accordance with the Place Names Database and the National Register of Addresses

Toponymic work at the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency as far as it is possible follows the principle stated in the UN resolution VII/5 in 1998 – geographical names standardization, based on a local usage of the local place names forms (collected through the extensive field work during 1990s, continuously elaborated and updated along with the cartographic production updating cycles)



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Place names in state cartography



Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000

2792 sheets, in digital version
only, the 4th edition is in process

The 4th edition is very special in
sense that the first time in the
practice of Latvian national
cartography, the cartographic
features such as watercourses
and waterbodies are linked with
the UID of the features of the
Place Names Database

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Work with Geographical Names: Latvia



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Data dissemination

Geographical names and maps of Latvia

- **Latvian Geospatial Information Agency Map Browser “LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks”**: <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv>
- Geographical names on the latest versions of **maps of Latvia**, scales
- 1: 1 000 000 – 1:10 000 (the central part of Riga at scale 1: 2000) prepared by this institution
- Names from the **Place Names Database**
- Address feature names and administrative and territorial unit names and boundaries from the **National Address Register**
- Rough **geometries** from the Place Names Database illustrating names extent
- **Version for mobile phones**: <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/mobile>

Place Names Database of Latvia (Latvijas Vietvārdu datubāze), public version (in Latvian only): <https://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv/>

Brief description in English: <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/place-names-database-0>



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Data dissemination

Geographical names and maps of Latvia

The screenshot shows a GIS application interface. On the left is a sidebar with various map layers and settings. The main map area displays a topographic map of Latvia, with a pop-up window titled 'Centroids of VDB areas' overlaid on a swamp area. The pop-up window contains the following information:

Object ID	91273
Base name	Serg swamp
Type	swamp
Condition	exists

Below the table are two buttons: 'See VDB' and 'Zoom in'. The map shows the Gauja river and surrounding areas, including the town of Gauja and the Dzirnuzers area.

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Work with Geographical Names: Latvia

Data dissemination

Useful links

Geographical names and maps of Latvia

- 1) Place Names Database of Latvia: <https://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv/>
- 2) Database and Map of Livonian Place Names: <https://livonian.tech/en/>
- 3) Standardized Names of Countries and Territories in Latvian (including capital cities): <https://www.vvc.gov.lv/lv/media/152/download?attachment>
- 4) Data distribution portal of State Land Service of the Republic of Latvia (textual and spatial data in National Real Estate Cadastre information system and in National Address Register): <https://www.kadastrs.lv/>
- 5) Latvian Geospatial Information Agency Map Browser (LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks) <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/karte/>
- 6) Geoportal of Latvia: <https://geolatvija.lv/geo/mapviewer>
- 7) Digital map collection of the Latvian National Library with Georeferenced map viewer (maps from 17th century to contemporary): <https://kartes.lndb.lv/>
- 8) Dodies.lv historical map portal: <https://vesture.dodies.lv/>
- 9) "Jāņa Sēta" Map Browser Balticmaps: <https://balticmaps.eu/lv>



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Data dissemination

Useful links

Open data and INSPIRE data sets on territory of Latvia – geographical names

- <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/place-name-data-open-data>
- <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/inspire>
- <https://geolatvija.lv/geo/search> (open data on place names, administrative territories, cadastral units, addresses)
- <https://inspire-geoportal.ec.europa.eu/>



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Thank you!

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